

Pets tips 'n' tales: Cleo's Christmas miracle



COURTESY PHOTO

(L to R) Elinor, Molly, Amanda holds Adeline and their miracle cat CleoCatra, and Shane.

By MaryEllen Scribe
For The Sentinel

As CleoCatra (Cleo) the seven-month-old Russian Blue cat's family was moving from Utah to Washington state, tragedy struck.

They were traveling in two vehicles. Shane, the daddy, was ahead of his wife Amanda's van which carried their three children Elinor-5, Molly-3, and Adeline-1, their cat-Cleo and dog-Irene. The vehicles were packed to the hilt, and like many traveling families, the pets sat on the children's laps.

Then the unthinkable happened outside of Pendleton, Oregon. The van's tire blew. The vehicle rolled over and landed on its roof. The totaled van's windows shattered allowing their pets to escape. Amanda and the children were banged up but have since healed.

In the mayhem that pursued, both pets bolted. Irene was killed by a passing vehicle and Cleo disappeared. The dev-

astated family was stranded in Pendleton for a few days. All the while they hoped that Cleo would turn up at a shelter.

"Molly named her stuffed animals Cleo," said Amanda, "and Elinor cried every night for her kitty."

The family eventually rented a van and headed out to their new home in Bellingham, Washington.

Two weeks before Christmas their phone rang and Amanda began crying.

"This is the last phone call I imagined," she said. "Oh my gosh! I can't believe you found her!"

On the phone was animal advocate, Robin, a Pendleton Animal Welfare Shelter board member.

What a smart cat Cleo was because she ran a mile from the busy freeway and took up refuge in Robin's barn.

Twelve days after the car crash, when Robin was in the barn feeding her horses she saw a young cat scampering up into

the rafters. She climbed up after it and there was Cleo!

"She told me that Cleo still had her ID collar," said Amanda. "We were all amazed that it had stayed on in the accident. Robin read our number and immediately phoned. Can you believe that kitten survived a vehicle accident, hunger, a snowstorm and freezing temperatures for almost two weeks!"

When Elinor and Molly heard the amazing news, they jumped up and down with joyful abandonment. Adeline didn't understand what was going on; but when Robin sent us a picture of Cleo, Adeline wanted to stare at it all night."

Robin's newspaper featured Cleo's story to see if anyone could drive the kitty to Bellingham. Luckily, a woman who lives in Bellingham had a daughter graduating from Boise State and they volunteered to bring Cleo when they drove home. And they did, a week before Christmas on Molly's birthday.

"Cleo has regained the

weight she lost back and is doing great," said Amanda, "She loves us and we do her. Our children giggle watching Cleo play. One day, the cat was playing in her open crate when she discovered a toothbrush. It took seven hilarious minutes for her to wiggle the toothbrush into the crate, leaving her us all in glee-filled hiss-terics. I still am amazed how our story turned out. It was a good Christmas after all."

TIPS

In retrospect Amanda said, "We had sold most of our possessions before the move and packed the van with what was left. I wish we had made room for our pets' crates, never thinking that something terrible would happen."

Shane and I can't believe that Cleo's collar stayed on for two weeks. From now on all our pets will have microchips, so we don't have to rely on a miracle to have them returned!"

Sadly, Cleo's case is not isolated. When I was the photographer for the fire department, the responders to the freeway crashes were well aware of how many pets escape during the emergency attention shown to their guardians.

When traveling with a pet, even a pet carrier can pop open during a crash. A microchip is the best way to have your lost pet identified as collars and ID tags can get lost in the confusion.

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